

A baby is born

Review of Rufus Gouws, Mariza Stark & Liezl Gouws: *Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense*. Kaapstad: Maskew Miller Longman, 2004.

This dictionary is the second monolingual learner's dictionary of Afrikaans. The first one was *Basiswoordeboek van Afrikaans* from 1994 which also included Rufus Gouws among the main authors. This, however, doesn't mean that the two dictionaries are like twins. They are far more like brothers or sisters with quite different appearances. Whereas the former was purely monolingual, the new one is monolingual with a bilingual dimension. Whereas the former contained about 6.000 lemmata, the new one treats less than half of this amount. But this last fact doesn't mean that *Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense* is half as good as its elder brother. Quite the contrary. The new dictionary is by far the best Afrikaans learner's dictionary until now and may, so to say, be considered the first of the South African Big Five or, at least, a baby version of one of these Big Five. And this assessment is not due to the number of lemmata but to the fact that the data included in the dictionary – and especially in the about 2.500 dictionary articles – seem to constitute reasonable answers to the needs that the well-defined user group may have in at least one of the envisaged user situations. This represents another big difference between the two dictionaries. Whereas *Basiswoordeboek van Afrikaans* presents itself as a learner's dictionary in general, without specifying the types of learners and user situations where it can be helpful, the authors of *Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense* explicitly write on the back page:

«*Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense* is 'n verklarende woordeboek vir addisionele taal-leerders van Afrikaans. (...) *Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense* word ondersteun deur die gewilde *Nuwe Afrikaans sonder grense* Graad 3 tot 12 handboekreeks.»

[*Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense* is an explanatory dictionary for additional language learners of Afrikaans. [...] *Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense* is supported by the popular *Nuwe Afrikaans sonder grense* Grade 3 – Grade 12 text book series.]

The concept «addisionele taal-leerders van afrikaans» (additional language learners of Afrikaans) is a specific South African concept referring to learners who are studying Afrikaans as their third or fourth foreign language. This is a very specific type of users that is further specified by the information that the dictionary is related to a specific series of text books, i.e. the user group is

constituted by school children from the third to the twelfth degree that use the mentioned text books.

Except for the expression «verklarende woordeboek» which normally refers to dictionaries for text reception, nothing is said explicitly about the user situations in which the learners are expected to consult the dictionary. However, the authors inform privately that the intended user situations are reception and production of Afrikaans texts. The inclusion of text production as one of the envisaged user situations constitutes, as it will be seen, the main criticism that can be directed against the dictionary.

It is evident that the intended user group can be defined as what is traditionally called learners at a beginner's level. The needs of this specific type of learners differ in many ways from those of the more experienced and advanced learners. In terms of text reception, they need very easy explications in the foreign language or equivalents in their mother tongue. *Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense* has both although the equivalent as a lexicographic innovation only is presented in the example following the explication:

kennis naamwoord
(-, -)
1. Kennis is dit wat iemand weet.
=> *Jy moet met hom gaan gesels oor jou kar, hy
het baie kennis [knowledge] van motors...*

[knowledge] Noun
(-, -)
1. Knowledge is that which someone knows.
=> *You should talk to him about your car, he
has a lot of knowledge of cars...*

Example 1: Extract from article in *Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense*.

If this article is compared with the corresponding article in *Basiswoordeboek van Afrikaans*, it becomes clear how the explication has been improved:

kennis nw. 1. Wanneer 'n mens goeie, slegte, grondige, ens. kennis van iets het, ken jy so iets goed, sleg, grondig, ens. *Die San se kennis van die veld is uitstekend. Kennis van Latyn kan net deur studie verwerf word. Toets jou kennis van jou eie land met hierdie vragie. [...]*

[kennis nw. 1. When you have a good, bad, thorough, etc. knowledge of something, you know that thing good, bad, thorough, etc. *The Sans' knowledge of the field is excellent.*

Knowledge of Latin can only be obtained by means of study. Test your knowledge of your own country with this question.]

Example 2: Extract from article in *Basiswoordeboek van Afrikaans*.

The explication in *Basiswoordeboek van Afrikaans* is not bad and it might actually help a lot of potential learners of Afrikaans with problems related to text reception, but the learners at the very beginner's level may have difficulties and are by far better off with the explication in *Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense* which also includes an equivalent in English that would normally be the first or second language of the *addisionele taal-leerders van afrikaans*. Apart from this, *Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense* also lemmatizes irregular flexion variants of Afrikaans nouns, verbs and adjectives. This was recommended by Tarp/Gouws (2004) and is absolutely necessary for the learners at the beginner's levels who are not supposed to know that, for example, *oë* (eyes) is the plural form of the noun *oog* (eye) which is the lemma where all the necessary data can be found. As to the lemma selection, Tarp (2006) argues that not only the advanced and experienced learners but also the learners at a beginner's level, as a rule, need a considerable amount of lemmata, e.g. the more than 50.000 that are included in the English Big Five, in order to get lexicographically assisted in text reception as they are expected to hear or read a lot of new and unknown words in their daily life during the foreign language learning process. There is only one exception from this rule and that is when the learning process is taking place in a «controlled environment», e.g. in a class room and related to a specific text book. This is exactly the case with *Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense* where the lemmata is selected according to the following criteria:

«Hierdie woordeboek bevat nie naastenby alle Afrikaanse woorde nie, maar wel die belangrikste woorde vir die teikenmark. Die woorde wat opgeneem is, kom veral uit boeke in die handboekreeks *Nuwe Afrikaans sonder grense*. 'n Woordelys is saamgestel om vas te stel watter woorde in hierdie handboeke die meeste gebruik word. Die lys is aangevul met ander algemene woorde in Afrikaans.»

[This dictionary does not nearly contain all Afrikaans words but only the most important ones for the target market. The words included primarily come from books in the text book series *Nuwe Afrikaans sonder grense*. A word list had been compiled in order to determine which words occur the most frequently in these text books. The list was supplemented by other Afrikaans words with a general use.]

In this way, the relatively small number of lemmata in *Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense* is by no means a disadvantage, but an advantage compared with the much bigger number in, e.g., *Basiswoordeboek van Afrikaans* which is a

learner's dictionary *in general* whose users might need at least ten times the selected number of lemmata in order to get assistance in terms of text reception.

As to text production, *Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense* shares fate with the overwhelming majority of declared learner's dictionaries: it includes the necessary morphological data but it is very stingy when it comes to explicit syntactic data which are indispensable in terms of assistance to text production. In this sense, *Nuwe Woordeboek sonder grense* is not the first of the South African Big Five, but only a baby model. But in terms of text reception for the intended user group it is without any doubt the first learner's dictionary of Afrikaans that merits to be titled as such.

Literature

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